LODI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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EARLY LODI DRUGGISTS

By Lucy Reller and Ralph Lea

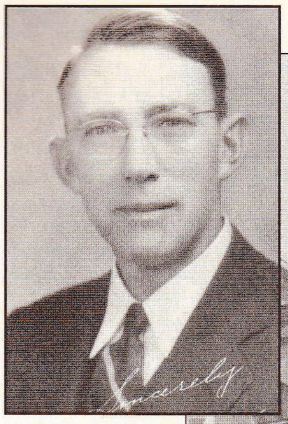
▲ ***Byron De La Beckwith***
Born in Virginia and came to California shortly after the discovery of gold. He conducted Lodi's first drug store.

Byron De La Beckwith – Our First Apothecary

In 1870, just after the town of Mokelumne Hill was founded, Byron De La Beckwith opened a drug store. His first building was located at the northeast corner of Elm and Sacramento Streets. A short time later Beckwith built a house-like building on the northwest corner of the same street. At that time, Byron was also selling insurance but in 1874 he became the Lodi Postmaster and first telegraph operator.

In 1876 the Lodi Hall Association was formed with Mr. Beckwith as one of the directors. They built the Grangers Building which is still standing at the southeast corner of Elm and Sacramento Streets. Byron Beckwith

▲ *Inside Graham's Corner Drug Store. L-R: Harvey S. Clark, Jr., Postmaster 1901-1914; Harry Moore; R.L. Graham, had mustache at this time and Blanche Housman.*



1881 Robert L. Graham at the start of his ownership of his Lodi drug store.

▲ *Graham's Drug Store, famous for ice cream soda with crushed fruit*

1921 Robert L. Graham forty years later as the honored business man.

rented space in the building for $15.00 a month. It is not clear if this space was utilized for the post office or some other use but paid the rent as long as he was in Lodi.

The Beckwith family migrated from Normandy, France to England and then to the state of Virginia. Byron came to California shortly after the gold rush and settled near the town of Woodbridge.

After selling the drug store in Lodi, Beckwith turned his attention to irrigation water. In 1886 Byron Beckwith was one of the first in the state to apply for a permit to divert water from the Mokelumne River for irrigation purposes.

The Woodbridge Canal and Irrigation Company was started and by 1891 a dam made of timber was in place in Woodbridge with 24 miles of canals.

Due to the high runoff during the spring of 1895, the dam failed. It was rebuilt several times before the present concrete version was set.

Byron Beckwith moved to Colusa and started a canal district. Mr. Beckwith died there in 1904.

▲ *Graham's Drug Store with I.O.O.F. Lodge above.*

Robert L. Graham

Robert L. Graham was born in the Live Oak area in 1855. He graduated from Stockton Business College twenty years later. He worked at the Beckwith Drug Store for two years and then started working on the family farm.

For the next four years he worked on the farm and in 1881 he went back to work for Beckwith. After three months he purchased the business and building for $2,000. It was a house-like building on the northwest corner of Sacramento and Elm Streets.

Graham moved his store and in 1886 the Oddfellows Lodge built a two story brick building on that corner. He opened a new drug store on the ground floor of the building and most lodge meetings were held upstairs.

Along with the purchase of the drug store, Graham also became

Postmaster and telegraph operator and in 1884 the first telephone in Lodi was placed in his store. Two years later six more telephones were installed by the Sunset Telephone Company and connected to important places all around the country. Agent Graham became the first telephone manager when a small switchboard was placed in his store.

In 1883 there were no drug stores in Woodbridge. There were seven in Stockton and two in Lodi, Graham, and George F. Hanson who was selling drugs and stationery.

Frank H. Hollis was a clerk and druggist for R.L. Graham and by December, 1884 he bought the Hanson Drug Store which was on Sacramento Street next to Gertie DeForce Cluff's newspaper office.

Things did not go very well for Frank Hollis. In April of 1885 a large whirlwind (maybe a tornado) caused the items from the walls of the parlor in his home to come crashing to the floor. It also ripped boards from the fences.

By the middle of November, Mr. Hollis had to file a petition of insolvency. His debts amounted to $2201.24 and assets held totaled $1153.00.

There must not have been enough business in Lodi for two drug stores. On the first of December, the sheriff had a sale of Hollis' stock and fixtures that sold for $610.00 which went to the former owner George Hanson then residing in San Francisco.

The Hollis family moved to Plymouth, California where Frank took charge of a drug store there.

George Hanson opened a drug store in San Francisco while he studied to become a physician.

In June of 1886, Robert Graham married Sarah Schu, a member of a pioneer Lodi family. They had two fine daughters, LeRelda and Gladys.

In the fire of 1887 the old Hanson and Company store building was destroyed but Graham's was saved. Robert Graham lost his job as Postmaster but became a notary public and started selling stationery and other assorted items along with drugs.

At that time, Lodi had three doctors, Gordon, Scott and Williamson. Although there was some question of the qualifications of the early doctors, a lot of them did double duty as pharmacists. They filled prescriptions in back and sold soap out front. A stone mortar and pestle, pill press and balance scale were just a few of the items needed to operate a drug store.

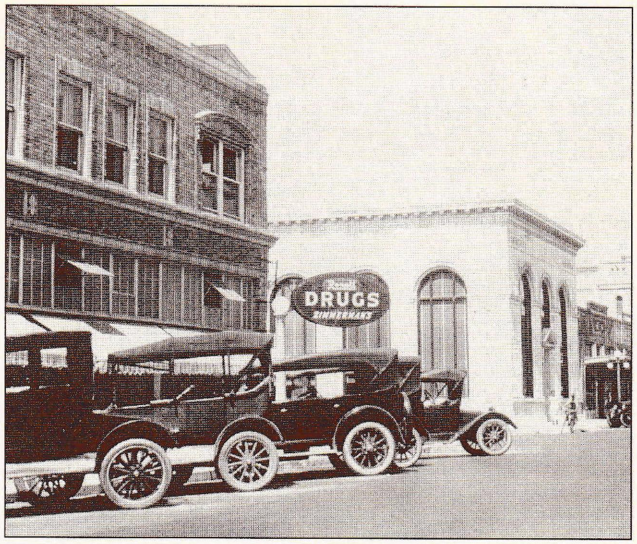
Lodi did not have a physician dispensing drugs but we had a druggist that helped diagnose minor illnesses and prescribed possible cures. "Doc" Weihe and druggist G.L. Hanson who quit to become a doctor.

Druggists acted as a check on physicians and in the absence of the doctor attended to his patients.

The hottest selling items on the drug store shelves were patent medicines. If you believed the labels, any complaint could be treated and some even promised to cure 30 different disorders, including "Nervous Debility Caused By the Indiscretions of

Window display at Zimmerman's – A dose of salts was proposed for good health. *Photo courtesy of Fran Wilson* ▲

Early window display at Zimmerman's – Lots of Hat Dye. ▲
Photo courtesy of Fran Wilson



Zimmerman's drug store, Oak and School Streets, from 1923 - 1958. ▲

▲ *Sam Zimmerman, leaning on the horse rack with two friends, circa 1910.*
Photo courtesy of Fran Wilson.

Youth." Most drug store remedies relied on a heavy lacing of alcohol to work their wonders. Some stomach bitters packed a 50 proof wallop.

Cod liver oil, diet enrichers, medicated dressings and herbal nostrums complemented the apothecary supplies. Early day drug store proprietors could purchase laudanum, arsenic, cocaine, morphine, quinine and castor oil for 10¢ to 50¢.

Leeches were kept in bottles by the druggist for their use for "bleeding." The cost was 10¢ if used at the store or 15¢ if used at home.

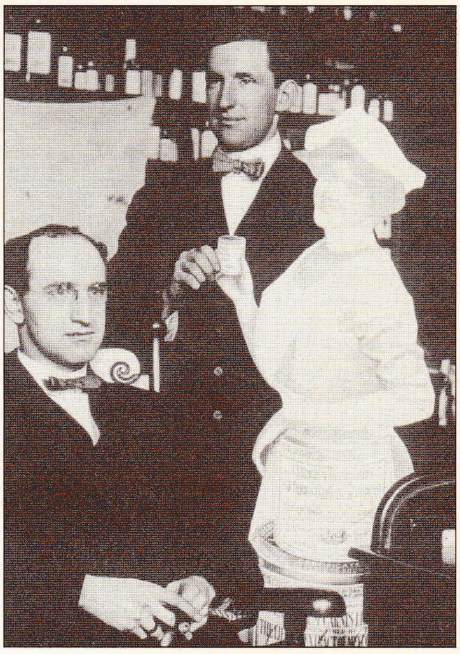
Until 1906 there were no restrictions on the contents of patent medicines and their sales flourished. The top price for any medicine was 50¢ and selling $5.00 worth in one day kept you very busy.

The druggist made his own quinine tablets and bags of Epson salt were filled by the Graham daughters and sold for 10¢. Morphine and other narcotics could only be sold to patients that signed for them.

"Lady Pinkham" was a popular patent medicine for Lodi ladies. There was lots of alcohol in most bottled medicines.

R.L. Graham installed a beautiful American innovation in his drug store. At a cost of $2000.00 it was a modern soda fountain, ten feet long, built of solid marble and porcelain. The draught column was built of the finest onyx with four arms of silver and surmounted with a Tiffany lamp of fine glass in an oriental style. The syrup was squished through this latest fountain which could be taken apart easily for cleaning.

Graham's was a very popular place for the young and older people of Lodi. LeRelda and Gladys worked at the fountain for thirteen years. The ice cream sodas were sold for 10¢ or three for 25¢. Mrs. Graham made five gallons of custard each day that was



▲ *Sam Zimmerman, owner, Carl Stark, druggist, and cardboard friend.*
Photo courtesy of Fran Wilson.

then added to five gallons of a rich cream. Mr. Graham made up vanilla and strawberry flavors. The delicious ice cream was frozen by using ice and rock salt and a hand cranking device that the girls took turns operating.

The store was open every day from early morning until 10 or 11 at night when the last customer was gone. Lodi's Constable, H.B. Coleman waited outside the store each evening until the girls had cleaned the counter for the day. He then sauntered in and ordered an ice cream soda.

The daughters complained to their father about Mr. Coleman. His answer was that as long as their door was open they were open for business and customers did not want to contend with childish behavior.

The traction line depot and post office were part of the store. Mr. Graham kept a squirrel in a circular cage and also an uncaged canary in the store. The canary was quite tame and pecked the daughters gently.

He was in business for 41 years and on June 20, 1922 he took his first vacation in 35 years. He went to

Zimmerman's employees and spouses at a party (maybe Christmas), circa 1910. ▲
Photo courtesy of Fran Wilson

Yosemite Valley where he was stricken and died.

In 1891 Graham had the only drug store in Lodi but George F. McClelland opened the first drug store in Woodbridge.

Two years later Charles A. Mertz started the second drug store in Woodbridge and Lewis H. Thompson opened the second drug store in Lodi on Sacramento Street near Elm. Parker H. Thompson was the store clerk for Lewis (maybe his brother). George Emde is a clerk at Graham's store.

Two years later C.A. Mertz was the only druggist in Woodbridge and Lodi has Thompson's and Graham's. At this point Frank Christman is a clerk for R.L. Graham.

A short time later, Frank Christman opened his own store on Sacramento Street near Elm and remained in business for the next 15 years.

In 1899 George Emde was the only druggist in Woodbridge and by 1901 there were none. Lewis H. Thompson moved to the town of Corning to secure a drug store there. The same year, Sam Zimmerman from Helena, Montana came to Lodi and started working for the Frank Christman store.

Samuel Zimmerman

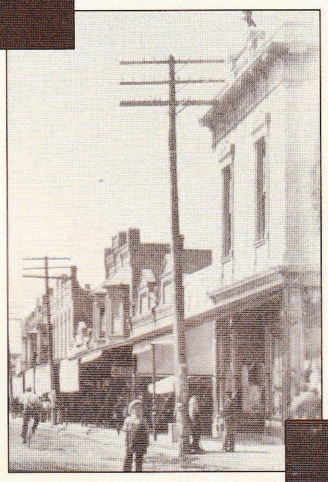
When the First National Bank built a new building in 1905 at 16 W. Pine Street, Samuel Zimmerman started his own drug store in the west half of the establishment. He sold drugs, sundries, Kodaks and photo supplies. Zimmerman started taking his own photographs and began selling pictures of Lodi and post cards that were very popular at that time. He lived over the store and became a very prominent citizen of the town.

Otto A. Weihe

We had the same three drug stores until August 11, 1911 when Otto A. (Doc) Weihe came to Lodi and purchased the Frank Christman drug store.

▲ *"Doc" Weihe contributed many of the artifacts and pharmacy tools on display in the Pioneer Drug Store at Columbia State Park Museum.*
Photo courtesy of Frances Lee.

Weihe Drug Store and Greyhound bus depot in the mid-thirties on Sacramento and Elm Streets. ▲



◄ *The building just south of the two-story Friedberger-Kaiser building was the place where Frank Christman and "Doc" Weihe had their drug store.*

► *Otto A. "Doc" Weihe was honored in 1925 and reigned as King of Lodi's 4th of July celebration.*

Photo courtesy of Frances Lee

Weihe was born in February, 1869, the second of nine children. When he was 10 years old his father passed away and the family moved to San Francisco. He helped support the family by delivering newspapers and milk in the mornings and ran errands for a drug store after school.

He did not attend high school but in 1889 did manage to graduate from U.C. College of Pharmacy. In 1894 he married Emily

1930 Memorial Day Parade in front of Hotel Lodi corner bank which became the City Drug Store a year later. Druggist, "Doc" Weihe in front on left and Judge Steel on right. ▼

▲ *Northwest corner of School and Pine Streets; L.U.H.S. Band in front of the Lodi Drug Co.*

Fisher and they had four daughters. He taught at the college for a short time and then moved to Nome, Alaska where he owned a drug store during the Alaska gold rush. When he was in Alaska he was called upon to handle some of the surgical needs of the people due to the lack of a doctor. He moved back to California, broke and clean shaven (last time). While in Lodi "Doc" Weihe always had facial hair.

Mr. Weihe received License Number 15 from the California State Board of Pharmacy in July 1901.

Otto Weihe was known to Lodians as "Doc." In Lodi, a great many of the German families went to a doctor only in an extreme emergency. "Doc" Weihe was happy to prescribe a treatment to any one who would describe their symptoms.

"Doc" was a founder of the Lodi Boys Club which met above his store. Two of his daughters married former members. Weihe was on the Lodi School Board for 16 years and in 1926 he was elected to the Lodi City Council and served for twenty years.

The California Traction Company closed the passenger depot in Weihe's Drug Store in 1933 so "Doc" started the Lodi Greyhound service at the store the same year.

A year earlier, during prohibition, Mr. Weihe lost a shipment of medicinal alcohol between the railroad station and his drug store.

In 1948 "Doc" returned as a druggist and moved the bus depot into his building at 15 W. Locust Street. Two years later he sold the agency due to poor eyesight. "Doc" said, "A pharmacist's feet give out before his head does."

Otto A. (Doc) Weihe sold his interest in the drug store to his partners, Lynn Boynton and Ken Bybee and in 1953 they moved the Weihe Drug Store to the southeast corner of School and Elm Streets.

"Doc" Weihe received many Pharmaceutical State Awards before passing away on August 10, 1961 at the age of 92, one day short of 50 years in Lodi. He is still remembered fondly by all who knew him.

Let us now return to the Lodi Drug Store story sixty years earlier to cover Edmund C. Schnaidt and others who moved to our town.

The Schnaidt family moved to Lodi in 1901 when Edmund C. Schnaidt was two years old. During World War I he joined the Navy and became a pharmacist mate. After the war he started working for Mr. Weihe. He entered the University of California and graduated in 1922. After graduation he returned to Weihe's but purchased Graham's Drug Store in August 1922, two months after the owner's death.

The next year, Michael E. (Mike) Crete came to Lodi from Willows and started the Lodi Drug Co. at the northeast corner of Pine and School Streets.

The same year, 1923, Henry Rinn became a partner of Zimmerman's Pharmacy. Sam Zimmerman was a director of the Lodi Investment Co. and when they completed their two story brick building on the southwest corner of School and Oak Streets, Sam and his partner Henry opened a second Zimmerman Pharmacy on the first floor. Leon B. Van Noate was hired to run the store.

In the next eight years, the drug stores of Lodi; Schnaidt's, Weihe's, Lodi Drug and the two stores of Zimmerman's, made very few changes. Mike Crete at Lodi Drug Co. and Zimmerman's Rexall Store, that were both on Pine Street, had free scales to weigh yourself. Young people would like to come into the stores, get on the scale to weigh themselves without having to buy anything.

Fran Wilson who started at Zimmerman's relates that almost every day two very large girls came into their store to weigh themselves. They must have been satisfied with the numbers because they always bought candy bars on the way out.

Wilson has in his possession the book that the prescriptions were pasted into. It was the sign-in book for the Lodi Hotel for the year of 1902. The first order for drugs was written by Doctor Grosshauser for Henry Miller. He received Bismuth AL for an upset stomach costing $1.00.

A poison register was required by 1915 with signatures of both the drug-

gist and purchaser. Strychnine for rats, gophers and cats, plus Kellogg's Ant Paste were the poisons used. Later years it was mostly Cherocal (codeine) cough medicine that was dispensed.

When the bank moved out of the southwest corner of the Hotel Lodi in 1931, E.C. Schnaidt and his new partner, J. Kenneth (Ken) Bybee opened a drug store in the building, giving them two stores. "Doc" Weihe became manager of their Sacramento Street store.

During the latter part of 1932, Weihe and his new partner, Lynn Boynton bought the old Graham drug store from Schnaidt. Leon Van Noate became a partner in Zimmerman's Pharmacy. A year later, Sam Zimmerman retired and left the business to the other partners. Rinn spent most of his time in the Pine Street store and Van Note made the School Street store his headquarters.

By 1935 the first drug store on the east side of Lodi was opened at 608 S. Central Avenue, with John W. Goehring, owner and druggist. Not sure if the drug store on the southwest corner of Pine and School Streets had been open the last two years but then it had owners Ken Bybee and A.C. Osler and was called the City Drug Store.

A year later J.W. Goehring had moved his drug store one block north to 514 S. Central Avenue for its permanent location.

In 1937 the Nippon Drug Company started a drug store at 116 E. Elm Street with F.M. and Masaru Ouye in charge. That same year, Walter F. Prouty took charge of the City Drug Store.

Three years later, Earl Volbrecht started a store at 216 North Cherokee Lane.

In 1932 Volbrecht sold the store and Clair Snyder became the new owner.

On October 1, 1943, Lodi lost an active member of the community when Sam Zimmerman passed away but the stores continued to carry his name.

When "Doc" Weihe retired in 1946, Ken Bybee and Lynn Boynton ran the store. Francis B. (Fran) Wilson was a pharmacist for Zimmerman's and a year later Fran Wilson and Francis Struempf bought into the partnership with Rinn and Van Noate.

In April 1952, Robert F. Hunnell, who had been working for Crete, opened a drug store at 519 W. Lodi Avenue. At about the same time, Walter Prouty became ill and sold his City Drug Store to Felix Marincovich.

There were more changes in 1955 when Weihe's Drug Store moved to the southeast corner of School and Elm Streets and Mike Crete added their old store to his name. Milton W. Coppi ran the store for Crete's. At about this time the Goehring Drug Store no longer existed.

Mike Crete passed away and his wife Leta was in charge of the Lodi Drug Co., but by 1958 their only store was located at 25 W. Pine Street.

In October of 1958 the four owners located a new Zimmerman's Owl and Rexall Drug Store in the Quonset Building formerly occupied by the Purity Grocery Store. They had three pharmacists on duty in the self service store located at 121 S. School Street. Fran Wilson, Leon Van Noate and Francis Struempf manned the new store while Jerry and Henry Rinn worked the Pine Street store.

Robert Hunnell, a pharmacist's mate during WW II and long City of Lodi councilman, added Eldred Fredstrom as a partner and moved to 400 W. Lodi Avenue. Felix D. Marincovich opened The Avenue Drugs at 730 W. Lodi Avenue and Calvin H. Yamada and Hiroshi Fujikawa purchase the Snyder Drug Store.

In 1962 the Fairmont Pharmacy opened at 340 S. Fairmont Avenue with Warren C. Dow as the manager.

The following year, Ben and Eleanor Drewes are listed at 510 N. Ham Lane. Bob Hunnell and "Fred" Fredstrom opened their second store, The Medical Arts Pharmacy just north of Lodi Memorial Hospital at 845 S. Fairmont.

The Zimmerman name disappeared when the remodeled Pine Street store becomes Rinn's Pharmacy, with Jerry Rinn and Jerry Mann as owners. The S. School Street Zimmerman store was changed to Wilson's Pharmacy with Fran Wilson and Leon Van Noate as owners.

In 1965 the Rinn Pharmacy was then owned solely by Jerry Mann.

1958 the old Purity Grocery Store converted to a modern drug store; School Street opposite the Post Office. ▲

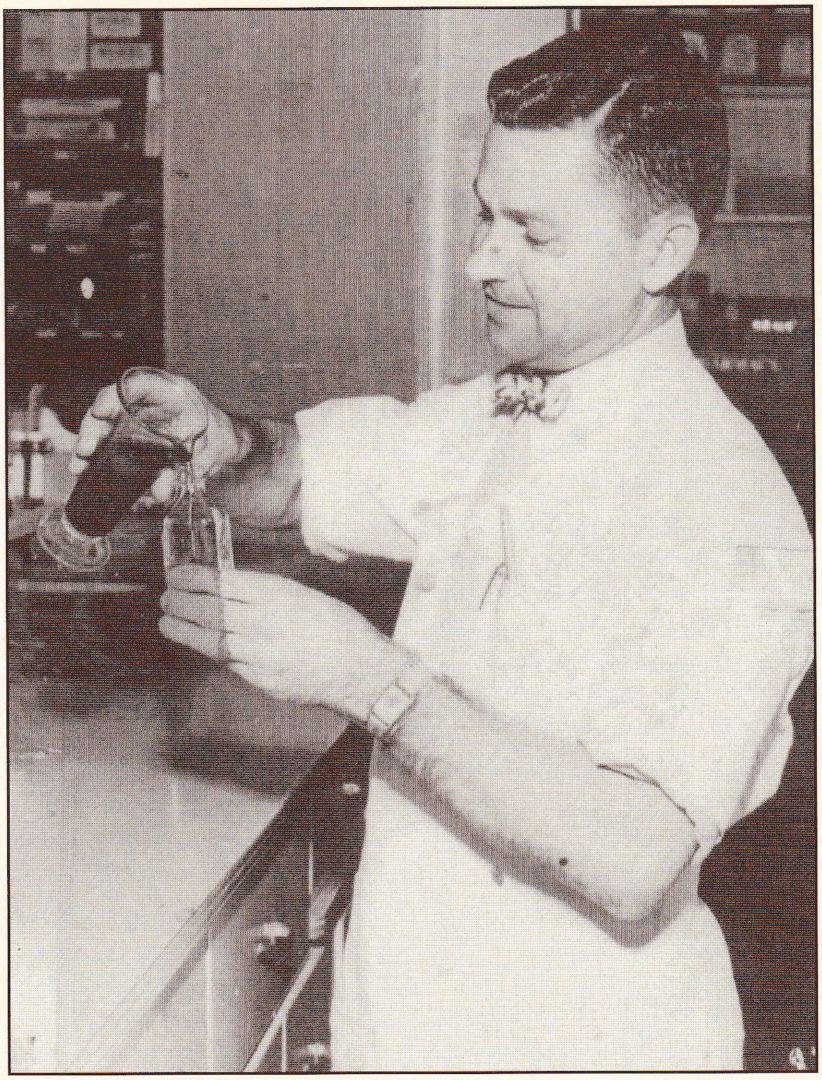
This is also the start of Lakewood Drugs, located at 310 N. Ham Lane with Carl Fink and Nick Spanos as owners.

Four years later, 1969, The Lodi Drug Co. shows William Crete, president, his mother Leta as vice president and brother Richard as secretary-treasurer.

At the Wilson Pharmacy, Kenneth R. Erlenbusch is the new partner of Fran Wilson. The Rinn's Pharmacy changes to Mann's. Jerry Mann passed away the next year and his wife ran the store until Milton W. Coppi became the new owner.

Early 1969 was the start of the big chain drug stores coming to Lodi. Gibson's Pharmacy was Lodi's first discount store. It was located at 315 W. Kettleman Lane. After four years the store closed. Long's opened at its present location at 100 S. Church Street and has become a fixture since 1970.

The small local stores were able to hold their own until 1976 when Coppi closes Mann's at 16 W. Pine Street after 65 years and then purchased the 47 year old Lodi Drug Co.



Francis (Fran) Wilson filling a medicine bottle in 1950. ▲

In 1977 the 107 year old drug store first started by Byron Beckwith is forced to close.

In 1978 the third chain store, Value Giant Pharmacy opened at 250 W. Lodi Avenue. Three years later, Value Giant changes to Payless Drugs and M.W. Coppi has closed the Lodi Drug Store.

In 1979 Fran Wilson sells Wilson's to Stanley Geiszler and another big chain, Thrifty Drugs opened on Kettleman Lane. The Ham Lane Pharmacy opened at 521 S. Ham Lane with A. Magnasco as owner. Dennis McComb operated The Avenue Drug on Fairmont Avenue. Bob Hunnells' son, John, is now in charge of The Medical Arts Pharmacy and Hiroshi Fujikawa operated Snyder's by himself.

A major change was the addition of the Raley's Drug Center on Lower Sacramento Road.

Changes will continue but we are proud of our pioneer druggists who met our needs over the many years.

REFERENCES

Interview of LeRelda (Graham) Patton, daughter of R.L. Graham (tape recording)

Interview of Frances (Cross) Lee, granddaughter of Otto A. Weihe

Interview of Francis Wilson, long-time Lodi druggist

Lodi Sentinel – 1881-1980

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